

Has Sierra Times Lost Its Focus?

A Response by J.J. Johnson - Sierra Times Editor & Chief 10.15.01

Unlike the case with some news services, there comes a time when this News Ranch has to air some of its own laundry. Recently, Sierra Sue publicly requested more feedback from our readers. One reader did respond, and his answer deserves a greater audience. He makes some points that need to be addressed, not only by Sierra Times, but by the media in general.

This person wrote:

You keep asking why your feedback has dropped off lately. I've hesitated to write this because I suspect that it will just tic you off but here goes.

Prior to 11 Sept., there were a wide variety of stories about the encroachments of the US federal government with particular emphasis on the problems of southwestern farmers and ranchers. Once the aircraft crashed into the World Trade Center towers, it seems that the only thing you are interested in is the so-called war that is going on. Worse, most of the "information" appearing in Sierra Times is no better than what is being reported in the mainstream media. Heck, JJ even came out against citizens flying armed due to some trumped up "air rage" problem. (Which, if he had bothered to check the data isn't even a problem.)

It appears to me that Sierra Times has lost its focus. I keep checking in to see what you all are doing lately and if you ever do get back to what you do best, I'll again become a supporter. But, for now, I'm just waiting for the subscription renewal notice to arrive to tell me when I've waited long enough.

To this loyal reader, and the rest of the Sierra Times audience:

To a degree, he is correct. Even though virtually all media have focused on the 'so-called' war, and even though the September 11 event included the deaths of persons known by friends and family here, and forced major changes in the way some of us here run our normal lives (driving when we used to fly; one ranch hand who lives in Washington, DC - directly affected; family members of ranch hands going off to a so-called war), perhaps it's time to do what President Bush says, and 'get back to normal'.

What is normal for Sierra Times is NOT to follow the protocol of the other media. Since September 11, I did not see other media lay out an [18 Wheels Advisory](#) calling for truckers to arm themselves, among other things. This alert was widely criticized (notably by the FBI) until the FBI put out its own alert on the subject matter. Then, all the criticism stopped.

We lost our focus again by laying out a Sierra Times Southern Border Advisory, calling for Southwestern residents to take steps at the Southern U.S. Border to prevent any encroachments. Although that was widely applauded, a [Mexican news web site wasted no time linking Sierra Times](#) to the Klu Klux Klan and Skinheads for daring to say that residents should be armed against their illegal encroachments. Of course, we could tell that news service that the Southern Border Advisory was written by a black guy, but why bother - we don't want to lose our focus.

As for the reader's comments about Sierra Times previously reporting a 'wide variety of stories about the encroachments of the US federal government', the reader needs look no further than the [Rules of Engagement Series](#) by J.J. Johnson, and the [We the Government Series](#) by John Lankford. In these issues, we have sought to empower the citizens of this country - not take their rights away. We confronted government encroachment not just by complaining about it, but by giving solutions as well. Honorable mention must also go to the [Junk Science Series](#) by Wayne Hicks, [Colonel Dan](#), [Vin Suprynowicz](#), [James Ante III](#) and others who have all written commentary about the potential loss of the rights of citizens. Bart Siegel has continued his steady watch over [Financial Market News](#) (staring panic right in the face), and [Radio Free RockyD](#) keeps us in stitches each week with his [Politically Incorrect Movie Reviews](#). And what would we do without Ray Thomas' [News Nuggets](#), and [Mama Sue's Mailbag](#) - both holding a steady wheel since September 11?

We have also added a [Canadian News Page](#) (for our growing audience to the north), Henrietta Bowman's news [War Room](#) to complement the [Sagebrush Saloon](#), and the return of [Dixie News](#).

Have we lost our focus, or has America lost its focus? That question could only be answered by the reader.

Among the issues that I find most intriguing is my stance (read: change of stance) about [armed passengers on commercial aircraft](#) that (as predicted) caused so much alarm with so many people. This is an example of an ongoing crisis that I have seen plaguing the entire country since September 11 - people seeing only what they want to see, misinterpretations of what they are seeing, and making decisions based on emotion rather than intellect. To put this matter to rest, I retracted the statement, saying my wife and I would not fly unless we and others were allowed to be armed. But before, I did not state passengers should NOT be armed, but quoted and agreed with the Pilots' Union Spokesman. Many who disagreed obviously read past this important statement:

"...As a person who has taken flight lessons, I can say that it is important that the person in charge of the aircraft has knowledge and complete control of all the tools at his disposal in case of any emergency. This would include armed personnel.

And so, the captain of the aircraft - not me - must call the shots, no pun intended. To the pilots of America - my apologies and hats off to you..."

Get the point? The Captain of the Aircraft - not me - not the FAA - should make the decision on who should be armed and how. Every American reserves the right not to fly on any aircraft.

I also decided (yes, I have a right to an opinion as well) not to cloud the issue the Pilots were pressing in the first place - their own right to arm themselves - something the President and Congress at that time were reluctant to do. On Thursday, the Senate approved an amendment that authorizes the Federal Aviation Administration to permit pilots to carry guns. Under the measure, airlines and their pilots would make the decision whether to put weapons in the cockpit. ([Las Vegas Sun, Oct. 12, 2001](#))

Even though we are not the other guys, while writing this article, I took a quick scan at four other high-traffic Internet-based news sites. All of those sites are devoting almost their entire pages to news about that so-called war. No need checking the print and broadcast media web sites.

Mind you, I'm not beating up on this reader. Here's where I agree with him: I am sick and tired of following news about this 'so-called' war, and would love to just 'get back to normal'. But it seems that no matter what's being covered, there is news breaking every five minutes about that so-called war that we and other news sites would be irresponsible not to report. I too, wish we could get back to the Real News for Real Americans.

Starting today, we will make an effort to do just that. We will try to let the other folks cover the so-called war, while we get back to News with an Attitude. But since September 11, nothing has been normal, and we have to deal with that as well. Rush Limbaugh is going deaf, and his voice has changed. But at least he shows up for work, which is more than I can say for Art Bell, whose 'back spasms' allow him to only speak into a microphone and answer phone calls once a week, while we must now pay for streaming audio of substitute hosts. Phil Hendrie is on the job - but many of his funny characters are absent now. Dr. Laura has had to switch from telling people why their lives are screwed up to going to battle with this new American psychosis. Michael Savage recently was forced to fight off a liberal caller, stating that "...the militias are some of the most patriotic and loyal Americans in the country." Like I said, nothing is 'normal' anymore.

One touchy subject that needs to be addressed by everyone: Is this really a war, or just a 'so-called war'? If we are not at war at this time, then someone should step up and explain exactly what a war is, and what it is not.

September 11, 2001 has had its good and bad effects. People are finding their faiths again. Divorces are down. Crime in general is down. Those who are fighting to get God back in schools now have the high ground. People are arming themselves. But on the bad side, I am sad to say that I have seen more backbiting, infighting, and name calling among Real Americans than normal. Every hour, I get another report on who's really behind it all, this whole thing is fake, some Internet Alert hoax, or the world's coming to an end. This while everyone's going crazy whenever someone spills baking soda somewhere, or opens up a confetti-laden greeting card on an airliner. Perhaps more than Sierra Times has lost its focus - maybe we all have.

As for my focus, a little voice in my head keeps telling me, "We have a Nation to Save", and a louder voice tells me, "Before you go out change the world, start by cleaning your own bedroom." Forgive me, for this week, I've have been guilty of doing just that - literally cleaning my own house (including Mr. Fix It duties), spending some quality time with loved ones, and doing some domestic work around the ranch; something which had been neglected for the past 12 months. You see, the reality is September 11 did not cause me to lose my focus. It was that event, and news of the following weeks, that have helped me regain my focus - on where my top priorities should be. How about you?

[Your comments are welcome.](#)

J.J. Johnson

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